

Message Text

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SUBJECT: HOKKAIDO REACTION TO SOVIET MILITARY EXERCISES

OFF ETOROFU

1. SUMMARY: PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT SENTIMENT IN HOKKAIDO
SEEMS TO BE TAKING A RELAXED, LOW-KEYED, COURSE IN
RESPONSE TO RECENT SOVIET MILITARY MANEUVERS AROUND THE
SOVIET HELD ISLAND OF ETOROFU NEAR HOKKAIDO'S NORTH EAST
COAST. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MOOD OF HOKKAIDO DURING SOVIET MILITARY MANEUVERS
OFF ETOROFU SEEMS TO BE ADEQUATELY REFLECTED IN THIS QUOTE
FROM THE JUNE 9, 1978 EDITORIAL OF THE HOKKAIDO NEWSPAPER:
"EVEN IN HOKKAIDO, VOICES STRONGLY ADVOCATE TAKING PRECA-
UTION IN WORDS AND DEEDS SO AS NOT TO PROVOKE THE SOVIETS
MORE THAN NECESSARY...WE, AS A MATTER OF COURSE, ARE
OPPOSED TO REINFORCEMENT OF SOVIET MILITARY FORCE
ANYWHERE IN THE NORTHERN ISLANDS SINCE A REVERSION OF THE
KURILE ISLANDS IS OUR LONG CHERISHED DESIRE. EVEN SO, WE
SHOULD LIKE TO RESERVE OUR VOICES IN ORDER NOT TO RAISE
ANTI-SOVIET FEELINGS. "THE HOKKAIDO NEWSPAPER, WITH A
DAILY CIRCULATION OF OVER 900,000 ACCOUNTS FOR WELL
OVER HALF THE NEWSPAPERS SOLD IN HOKKAIDO. THE GENERAL
REASONING OF THE EDITORIAL WAS THAT JAPAN KNOWS THE
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FUTILITY OF FORCE SO THAT THE GOJ'S RESPONSE OF LODGING A
PROTEST WAS THE CORRECT ONE, AND THAT FURTHER RESPONSE,
WHICH WOULD LEAD TO A USELESS DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS,
SHOULD BE AVOIDED. THE EDITORIAL ALSO AFFIRMED THAT,
WHATEVER THE MOTIVES BEHIND THE SOVIET MANUEVERS A SHOW
OF FORCE WOULD NOT CHANGE JAPAN'S POLITICS. ON THE SAME
DAY, THE NATION WIDE ASAHI NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED A MUCH

STRONGER EDITORIAL, THUS UNDERLINING THE RESERVE OF THE LOCAL REACTION.

3. THE GENERALLY LOW KEY TONE OF THE EDITORIAL WAS REFLECTED IN THE ATTITUDES OF CONSULAR CONTACTS IN THE PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT. THESE SOURCES NOTED THAT THERE WAS NO WAY TO CONFIRM THE EXACT EXTENT OF THE MANEUVERS, BUT THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT TO THEM WAS THAT NO HOKKAIDO FISHERMEN WERE ENDANGERED. THE SOURCES INDICATED THAT SINCE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD ALREADY ISSUED AN APPROPRIATE PROTEST, NO FURTHER ACTION BY THE HOKKAIDO GOVERNMENT WAS FORESEEN. SIMILARLY, CONSULATE CONTACTS IN NEMURO, THE CITY NEAREST THE MANEUVERS, INDICATED THAT THE CITIZENS WERE CALM AND THAT, SINCE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD PROTESTED, THERE WAS NO NEED FOR A PROTEST BY THE CITY.

4. COMMENT: HOKKAIDO'S GENERALLY RESTRAINED REACTION TO THE SOVIET MANEUVERS IS DUE TO THE REALIZATION THAT HOKKAIDO WILL SUFFER MOST IN ANY JAPAN-SOVIET CONFRONTATION. WHILE HOKKAIDO MAY OPPOSE VARIOUS SOVIET ACTIONS, UNLESS A VITAL REGIONAL INTEREST IS INVOLVED, ITS OPOSITION WILL BE COUPLED WITH CALLS FOR RESTRAINT IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE SITUATION FROM WORSENING. PRAGMATICALLY, HOKKAIDO REALIZES THAT THE SOVIET SHOW OF FORCE IS A MUCH LESS OBJECTIONABLE WAY TO SHOW SOVIET DISPLEASURE

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THAN IS HARASSING LOCAL FISHERMEN OR OTHERWISE INTERFERING IN THE DAILY LIFE OF HOKKAIDO. END COMMENT.
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